

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 031055Z AUG 73
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EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (P A R A S 1 (C) & (D))

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CB
SUBJECT: SON SANN'S POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

1. SENSING NEW POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MAKING,
SON SANN CAME TO SEE CHARGE AUGUST 2 TO MAKE THE
FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS:

(A) PRESENT POLITICAL STRUCTURE COMPOSED OF THE
HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL AND IN TAM GOVERNMENT IS
NOT VIABLE AND WILL SHORTLY BREAK UP. CHENG
HENG AND IN TAM WILL FOR DIFFERENT REASONS
PULL OUT. IF LON NOL AND SIRIK MATAK TRY TO
CARRY ON ALONE, THEY WILL FIND THEMSELVES THWARTED
AT EVERY TURN. JUST AS THE COMMOTION OVER CON-
SCRIPTION SHOWS, "IF YOU TRY TO STEP ON THE
ACCELERATOR, THE CAR GOES OFF THE ROAD."

(B) NOT ONLY WILL THE PRESENT STRUCTURE FAIL, IT
MUST BE REMOVED, FOR SIHANOUK AND THE INSURGENTS
WILL NEVER NEGOTIATE WITH THE MEN OF MARCH 18.

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(C) TO REPLACE THE EXISTING STRUCTURE, A "RULING
COMMITTEE" SHOULD BE FORMED, EXCLUDING LON NOL AND
SIRIK MATAK, BUT INCLUDING SUCH FIGURES AS CHENG
HENG, IN TAM AND DEMOCRATIC PARTY PRESIDENT CHAU

SAU. TO AVOID THE STIGMA OF DISSENT FROM THE EXISTING GOVERNMENT, WHICH SIHANOUK CONSIDERS ILLEGITIMATE, THE COMMITTEE SHOULD BE AN ENTIRELY NEW CREATION. IT SHOULD GOVERN WITHOUT REFERENCE TO ANY PARLIAMENT OR CONSTITUTION.

(D) SIMULTANEOUSLY, SON SANN SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO LAUNCH HIS "PEACE MOVEMENT", AS A VEHICLE BY WHICH THE PEOPLE NOMINATE HIM AS CAMBODIA'S PEACE MAKER TO NEGOTIATE WITH ALL EXISTING FACTIONS.

2. IN THE LONG DISCUSSION THAT FOLLOWED, CHARGE MADE THE OBVIOUS RESPONSE, ASSERTING THAT THE PROBLEM OF THE HOUR WAS NOT NEGOTIATION BUT SELF-DEFENSE. WE ASSERTED THAT THE ADOPTION OF HIS PLAN WOULD PROBABLY DEPRIVE THE REPUBLIC OF WHAT CHANCE REMAINS TO ORGANIZE A SUCCESSFUL RESISTANCE. SON SANN ADMITTED THAT MIGHT WELL BE THE CASE, BUT ARGUED THAT CAMBODIA IS DOOMED UNDER THE PRESENT LEADER-

SHIP, AND THAT WITH HIS PLAN THERE WOULD AT LEAST BE SOME ORGANIZED MOVEMENT OF YOUTH AND LEFTISTS REMAINING IN PHNOM PENH TO CONTEST POLITICAL POWER WITH THE INSURGENTS WHEN PHNOM PENH FELL. WE REMARKED THAT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD SIMPLY SOOT THAT MOVEMENT'S LEADERS.

3. SON SANN THEN CAME OUT WITH A FALL BACK PLAN, UNDER WHICH LON NOL WOULD GO BUT SIRIK MATAK WOULD REMAIN "ON CONDITION THAT HE GIVE HIS WORD OF HONOR TO LEAVE WHEN THE NEGOTIATIONS REQUIRE." WE GAVE OUR STANDARD RESPONSE TO THIS; AND SON SANN LEFT SAYING HE WOULD REFLECT ON OUR ARGUMENTS, ASKING US TO THINK ABOUT HIS, AND UNDERTAKING TO TAKE NO ACTION WITHOUT CONSULTING US.

4. COMMENT: WE REPORT THIS CONVERSATION CHIEFLY AS A NEW INDICATION OF SON SANN'S REEMERGING PERSONAL AMBITION. HE DENIED TO US THAT HE WAS PROMOTING HIMSELF FOR
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ANY PARTICULAR OFFICE, BUT ADDED THAT HE WOULD OF COURSE BE AVAILABLE FOR ANY TASK "THE PEOPLE WANT TO GIVE ME." TO JUDGE FROM THIS CONVERSATION, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT SON SANN WILL TRY TO MAKE HIMSELF A PART OF THE LOCAL EQUATION HERE FROM NOW ON.

5. LIKE SO MANY KHMER, SON SANN IS OBSESSED WITH LEGAL NICETIES, AND HAS A TOUCHING FAITH THAT THE OLD BOY NETWORK CAN SOMEHOW OVERCOME THE PROBLEM OF THE INSURGENCY. ALTHOUGH HE IS INTELLECTUALLY HONEST ENOUGH TO TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE MILITARY PROBLEM NOW GOVERNS POLITICS, HE OBVIOUSLY HAS YET TO GRASP IT. WE WILL KEEP AFTER HIM.
ENDERS

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